

Ustiben report

>INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST<

>ANTI-GYPSYISM: RALLY IN UK<

The International Day against Fascism and Antisemitism, marked with events around Europe yesterday (9 Nov) had its echo in the UK where Travellers rallied at a camping place facing imminent destruction by orders of the local municipality.

A message from new IRU general-secretary Zoran Dimov calling for the combating of anti-Gypsy racism was brought to the meeting by Grattan Puxon, a former secretary of the international organisation.

He said both IRU and Roma National Congress members were taking part in the International Day, urging people to recognize the current rise in anti-Roma sentiment. Events had been scheduled in Hamburg and Belgrade on the theme of "anti'Gypsyism" and the rights of Roma.

>EASTENDERS SEE TWIN OAKS<

Romanies from Kent, together with Essex Travellers, joined up with the residents of Twin Oaks caravan park near the world-famous Elstree Film Studios to call for implementation of new proposals put forward this week by a parliamentary commission.

Shaking hands with Twin Oak's resident Mike Slattery, Ray Roberts, of the Whistable and Herne Bay Gypsy Support Group, said: "We'll go anywhere to back up other Travellers. We'll all in the same boat right now."

Slattery said a scene from the popular television show >Eastenders< had been shot this week in Summerswood Lane, close to Twin Oaks. "They were very friendly and wanted to know what was happening to us - and we told them."

Unfortunately, their initial optimism was marred by the news from the BBC at 1pm that both Prime Minister Blair and his deputy, John Prescott, had rejected recommendations that would have made it easier to set up more urgently needed privately-owned and council-owned caravan parks.

In response, those at the rally spent the day preparing for what is expected to be a brutal eviction

attempt by Hertsmere Borough Council, to be carried out next week by a hired bailiff company specialising in "removal of Gypsies", the now infamous Constant & Co.. The price-tag for this ethnic-cleansing operation is expected to top 250,000 Euro.

A banner was nailed up at the entrance reading:

>"PLEASE LET US STAY ON OUR OWN LAND"<

The gate is now being chained and a boom set in place to hammer any eviction attempt

Some of the children from Twin Oaks are planning to take part in a young-Travellers' delegation to No 10 Downing Street, home of Tony Blair, on Thursday (11). They will be delivering a petition supporting the recent Bennett proposals and requesting an end to the present spate of evictions. More than 150 family plots have been "cleared" by Constant, hired by local councils all over England, in the past 18 months.

Also expected this week is a meeting between leading members of the National Association of Gypsy Women and UN Human Rights Commission officials. The NAGW has collected a dossier of information and video film on the evictions carried out by Constant and other private security companies, and is seeking a curb on their activities.

A public meeting on defending the rights of Travellers is taking place at 7pm on Saturday at the London Action Resource Centre, 62 Fieldgate Street, Whitechapel. Besides the crisis at Twin Oaks, the threatened closure of a caravan park in the London borough of Haringey will be on the agenda.

More than three hundred people have registered with the RED ALERT phone tree pledging to respond at short notice to join protests against any attempted evictions of Gypsies in the London area - where no alternative for their caravans is being provided.